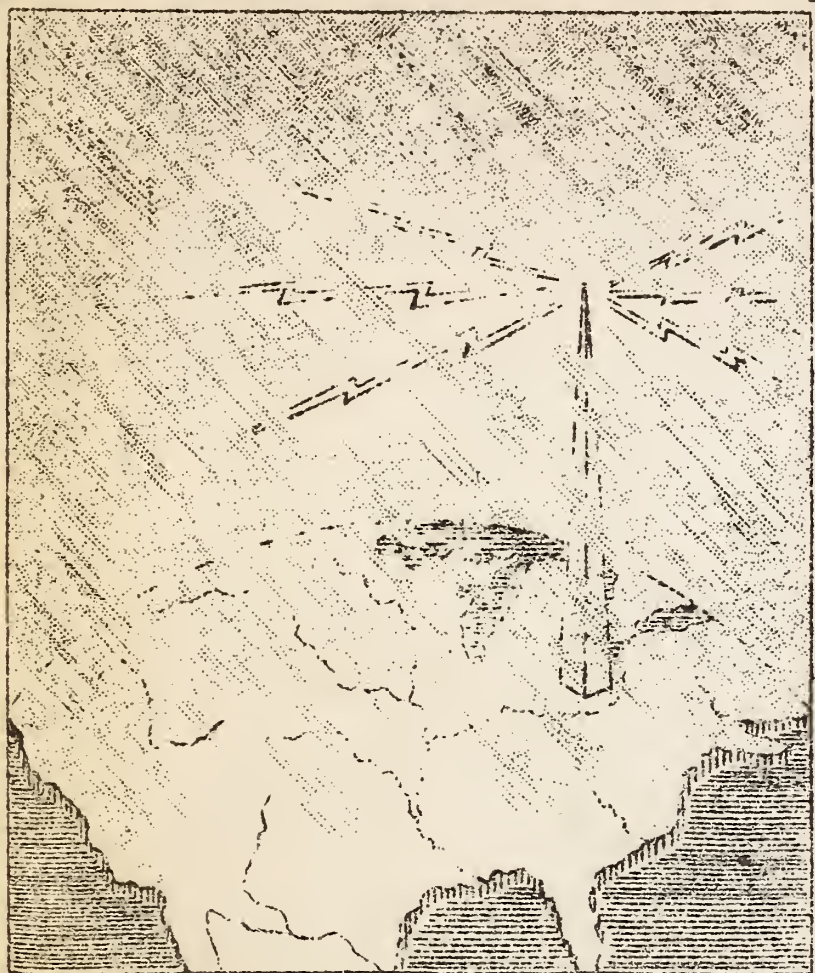


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FORTUNES

WASHED

AWAY

"AMERICA'S CHAMPAGNE COUNTRY"

Broadcast No. 1 in the third year
in a series of dramatizations
of better land use

WLW, Cincinnati

April 27, 1940

1:00-1:15 pm

645910

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
SOIL CONSERVATION SERVICE
DAYTON, OHIO

1891
1892

SOUND: Thunder and rain...

ANNOUNCER

Fortunes Washed Away!

ORGAN THEME: I GET THE BLUES WHEN IT RAINS.

ANNOUNCER

Long ago, say the Indians, the Great Spirit brought a handful of the happy hunting grounds to central New York and made the beautiful Finger Lake Country. Here, fertile soils along the shores of deep blue-green lakes and a mild, sunny climate have given this region the name of "The Italy of America" and made it one of the finest fruit sections of the world. Four-fifths of all the champagne made in America comes from grapes that grow in endless profusion on the vine-laced hills that dip deeply into lake waters. But the story of how the Finger Lakes came to be America's champagne land began long ago in the cool cellar of a Benedictine monastery in medieval France.....

MONK

The time has come, Brother Perignon, to examine that wine from Champagne province.

PERIGNON

Ah, yes...Brother...the wine from the hillside vineyards. We have given it great care.

MONK

More care than ever before.

PERIGNON

This is the cask here.

SOUND: Wine poured into cup....

MONK

Perignon! Perignon!

PERIGNON

What magic is this?

MONK

It sparkles like no Burgundy ever drawn from cask.

PERIGNON

And the taste, Brother.

MONK

We shall see. (sips). Only the grapes of Champagne could taste like this, I vow.

PERIGNON

Then we shall call it champagne....so that men may know it from ordinary wines. The like of this has never before passed lips of monk or noble.

ORGAN: CHAMPAGNE WALTZ.

ANNOUNCER

In 1860, Jules Masson brought his skill from France to the shores of Lake Keuka, and for the next half century America called on the Finger Lakes for a large share of its grapes. It was a golden age for the vineyardists.

SOUND: Low rumbling of thunder, then louder....

ANNOUNCER

But the rains over the Finger Lakes are not always gentle. For years the sudden heavy thundershowers in summer months have beaten away at the light, stony soils of the vineyards. Sam Arland and Bill Wickham have watched the storm clouds over the waters of Keuka and Seneca for many a long year. One day last July...(fade)

SOUND: Steam shovel chuffing in distance...

WICKHAM

I've been around here a long time, Sam...and my folks before me. I've never seen anything like this before.

ARLAND

I guess nobody has.

WICKHAM

Look at that machine down there....

ARLAND

Don't think I'm not looking. The highway department is clearing a small mountain of soil from the road. My soil.

WICKHAM

Yep, your soil, only you're looking at it for the last time.

ARLAND

Bill, it's going to cost me upwards of five hundred dollars to fix up the gullies where that soil came from. And that soil itself is priceless.

WICKHAM

You aren't the only one around here that's spending good cash money filling gullies, Sam.

ARLAND

Yeah, I guess misery loves company. But at least I haven't given up any of my vineyards yet, and there's a lot who have.

WICKHAM

What's going to become of this land? By George, I get the chills when I think of trying to find another place like the land around these lakes.

ARLAND

There isn't any other place like it. But, gosh! you're giving me the creeps.

WICKHAM

I'm giving you the creeps? If you aren't a gloomy Gus, then there never was one. You'd make old Scrooge look like a laughing hyena.

ARLAND

Let's go over and see John Lamb. He's the only one I know who has much to say that's cheerful.

WICKHAM

Come on. I need cheering up.

SOUND: Car started, drives off and fades out.

ARLAND (fading in)

Hello, John....we figured we'd find you here by your experiment tanks.

LAMB

Hello, Sam. Howdy! Bill.

WICKHAM

Pretty good, thanks....a little down in the dumps.

LAMB

Well, I've spent five years working with these tanks, studying soil and moisture losses.

ARLAND

You picked a steep enough hillside. Why, I don't reckon it'd be safe to climb it with an ordinary four-wheel tractor.

LAMB

Probably wouldn't be. But it's mighty interesting to compare vineyards planted on the contour, with those planted up and down the slope, like most of them around here are.

WICKHAM

Well, frankly, John...I figured that this last rain would just about wash your tanks out.

LAMB

No, far from it. But I hear it just about washed half of the vineyards around here down into the lake.

WICKHAM

That's an exaggeration.

ARLAND

Yeah, it's an exaggeration, all right. It was only a fourth of them. (they laugh).

WICKHAM

Seriously...how did your contour vineyard hold out?

LAMB

You can see for yourself. The measuring tanks over there caught only enough soil to make up one hundred pounds an acre.

ARLAND

Is that all, from a frog-strangler like we had? I'll bet you lost a trifle more than that in these up and downhill rows.

LAMB

Yes, a trifle. About a ton an acre.

ARLAND

There you are, Sam. I told you John Lamb could cheer us up if we came over here.

WICKHAM

Uh, huh....but I'd be a lot happier if all of my vine rows were on the contour.

LAMB

Then the best thing for you to do is to set out all of your new vines across the slope. I'm serious about these experiments. They have shown me that contour planting cuts down moisture and soil losses, and you know that soil losses cut down yields.

WICKHAM

I'll say I do...from experience.

LAMB

And I've learned that contour planting is the rock bottom fundamental for assuring future prosperity to the grape country.

ORGAN: CHAMPAGNE WALTZ.

ANNOUNCER

Finger Lakes fruit growers knew that their soil loss problem was critical, when their yields declined, when they saw raw gullies, rotting posts, sagging vines, wild brambles, sumac and weeds, when they saw their soil washed down to the lakes. Recently they met to discuss their predicament.....

SOUND: Crowd noises...rap of gavel....

WICKHAM

Wait a minute, let's get some order here. I think John Lamb's last statement bears repeating. Give it again, will you, John?

LAMB

I just said that yields were half a ton better on my contour vineyards, than on my regular vineyards during the last four years.

SOUND: Hum of voices....

WICKHAM

That's saying a lot. Now, a good many of you men have given up your own vineyards, just because the profit went out of grape growing when the soil washed down the hill. Now, what are we going to do?

ARLAND

What about forming a soil conservation district?

WICKHAM

That'd be a good idea, only the New York legislature hasn't passed an enabling act yet. It's one of 11 states that haven't. So, until we get a soil conservation district law here, that's out.

ARLAND

All right then...there's about 500 growers here. Suppose we send in a petition that a CCC camp be put in here, so that the soil conservation men can help us put our vineyards in good order, and keep this soil where it belongs.

SOUND: Loud hum of voices and applause...

WICKHAM

Anyone opposed to that motion? (pause)

LAMB

I'll sure second it.

ORGAN: Sneak in..FAR ABOVE CAYUGA'S WATERS.

WICKHAM

All right, but before we vote on this motion, I'd like to slip in one more word. I don't know if we'll be able to get a CC camp or a Soil Conservation Service project. We can try. If we don't, we'll have to do something else. But I do think, Sam, that's about the most important motion you ever made. This petition is going to be a turning point for the beautiful Finger Lakes country.

ORGAN: FAR ABOVE CAYUGA'S WATERS (Up and Out)

ANNOUNCER

Thus, contour planting came to be introduced to America's land of champagne. And now, once again we turn to the Soil Conservation Service of the United States Department of Agriculture, and here is Ewing Jones.

JONES

Thanks, _____. Contour planting is a fundamental for soil conservation in other fruit sections, too. Farmers in Berrien County, Michigan, for example, are turning to it more and more.

ANNOUNCER

Well, Ewing...how about a little "background information" on contour planting.

JONES

All right, let's dig down into the records. Contour planting of fruit -- the stone fruits -- began about 1895 in the southeast. Peach growers of Georgia and the Carolinas found that their trees grew old before their time, when they weren't protected from erosion and when the moisture slipped away down cultivated tree rows. And what is more important, they found that orchard sites couldn't be replanted profitably if erosion had damaged the soil badly. Commercially productive orchard sites aren't found on every hillside, so the growers decided that the thing to do was to protect the sites they already had.

ANNOUNCER

And contour planting was their answer.

JONES

Right.

ANNOUNCER

How many acres of contour planted fruit trees are there in the country -- do you happen to know?

JONES

I came prepared for that question, _____. About 50,000 acres. Most of it is in the Southeast, of course, but during the last years orchardists scattered throughout the country have taken it up in rapidly increasing numbers. Many of them say it's one of the best orchard practices that's come along since Johnny Appleseed scattered seeds all over the Northwest Territory. But here....

ANNOUNCER

What's the trouble, mister?

JONES

Why don't you get complete information while you're at it, and read up on this question.

ANNOUNCER

I'd like to, if I had the proper bulletin.

JONES

_____, copies of the bulletin may be obtained by sending a letter or a penny postcard to Soil Conservation, Dayton, Ohio.

ANNOUNCER

But what bulletin is that?

JONES

This particular one is Soil Defense in the Northeast. It has 70 pages chuck-full of information and photographs. From some of the chapters you can see that it's primarily about such farming regions as Ohio, West Virginia, New York, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and Maine, but with 70 pages of information, you can see readily that these Soil Defence bulletins would be valuable to farmers everywhere.

ANNOUNCER

What soil defense measures does it discuss, for example.

JONES

Do you want the entire list?

ANNOUNCER

If it's not too long.

JONES

It discusses farm management, contour farming, strip cropping, cover crops, and grassed waterways. There are sections on terracing, diversion terraces, pastures, woodland management, gully control....

ANNOUNCER

....okay, okay. So, farm friends, if you want a copy of the illustrated 70-page bulletin, write to Soil Conservation, Dayton, Ohio, and ask for the bulletin "Soil Defense."

SOUND: TELEGRAPH KEY CLICKING.

ANNOUNCER

News in the conservation world!

JONES

Here's the latest news of farmers soil conservation districts in rockbound Vermont, the Green Mountain State. Paul Miller, extension agronomist at the Vermont College of Agriculture reports.....

ANNOUNCER

Vermont farmers will hold four public hearings this week to find out whether their neighbors agree that a soil conservation district in the watershed of the Winooski and White Rivers would be to their interests.

Such districts became possible last spring when Governor Aiken signed the Vermont soil conservation district act after it had been passed by the state assembly. Since then, farmers in four sections of Vermont have petitioned for such districts. Most severe erosion problem they have to meet is the damage to fertile riverbank farms from high water and ice when the rivers break up in the spring. Right now the Winooski is testing river bank defenses of farmers near Burlington who have worked with engineers for four years to make the annual freshets harmless.

SOUND: Boom of cannon....

ANNOUNCER

This week we salute.....

JONES

This week we salute the Scott Brothers and E. B. James, manager of their Marvania orchards on the Mason and Dixon line near Hancock, Maryland. In 1912 the Scott Brothers laid out the first contour orchard for which there is any record in Pennsylvania or Maryland. Their neighbors scoffed but the 90 acre mixed block of peaches and apples they laid out 28 years ago is still a commercial producer. The site will grow fruit just as fine when the old trees come out and new ones are planted. A salute to the Scott brothers who have proved to their neighbors that a curved row in orchards pays.

ORGAN THEME: I GET THE BLUES WHEN IT RAINS.

ANNOUNCER

Remember, if you want a copy of the 70-page illustrated bulletin, Soil Defense, send a letter or a penny postcard to Soil Conservation, Dayton, Ohio. Next week, "Sam Davis: Boy Hero of the South."

SOUND: Thunder and rain....

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